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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR JODY OLSEN
FROM AMBASSADOR BOULWARE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2014
TAGS: [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [MR](#)
SUBJECT: PROPOSED SUSPENSION OF PEACE CORPS PROGRAM IN
MAURITANIA

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (S) I am concerned to have heard over the week-end that Peace Corps has decided to suspend its operations in Mauritania after nearly forty years of presence. I understand the decision has been reached based on an assessment of security conditions in the field. While I am fully cognizant of the need to ensure the safety of all American citizens, and especially of our volunteers, I have seen no intelligence or other security-related information suggesting that Peace Corps volunteers in Mauritania are being targeted by Al Qaeda. Mauritanian police actions over the weekend appear to have captured the Al Qaeda team responsible for the June murder of American missionary Christopher Leggett. That reduces the immediate threat for U.S. and western entities in Mauritania even as it seems to confirm that AQIM is prepared to target U.S. persons here and elsewhere in the region.

12. (S) The AQIM threat in the region has been a serious consideration for years. The recent spate of financially successful kidnappings by AQIM has both whetted their appetite for more of the same and given them the funding to support other terrorist activities. That said, the Mission Emergency Action Committee has assessed the current threat information and, finding the increased threat to be no greater than other posts in the region, has not recommended any change in our staffing level. The EAC specifically discussed the need for authorized departure and found no basis to make such a recommendation. I have fully agreed with the EAC's recommendations and have acted accordingly.

13. (S) Since my arrival at Post, I have been acutely aware of the safety and security of the Peace Corps volunteers in Mauritania. Had I seen any inkling of targeting of the volunteers by AQIM, I would have been the first to want them out of the country or, at a minimum, substantially redeployed to enhance their security. Peace Corps Director Shaw has been fully engaged in our EAC and I have full faith and confidence in his management of all aspects of the Peace Corps program.

14. (S) Under the provisions of NSDD-38, deletions as well as additions of direct hire American positions are supposed to be referred to the Chief of Mission for consideration. There has been no Peace Corps consultation in this instance. I understand that Peace Corps had already scheduled an August review of the security posture of volunteers in Mauritania, Mali, and Niger. I would recommend that we await the results of that review and then determine jointly the future of the Peace Corps program. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this situation further via secure telephone or video conference.

BOULWARE